

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Please amend claim 1.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for puncturing a proximal membrane without puncturing a distal membrane comprising:

distally advancing an elongated body through a first elongated tubular member to a first position where a distal end of the elongated body is in a first configuration outside a distal end of the first elongated tubular member, the elongated body having a distal tip that is sufficiently rigid and sharp to puncture the proximal membrane;

puncturing the proximal membrane with the distal tip of the elongated body; and

advancing the elongated body distally through the punctured proximal membrane whereby the distal tip of the elongated body has shape memory and automatically moves into a second configuration having a blunt distal surface facing the distal membrane.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1 further comprising encasing the first elongated tubular member within a second tubular member.

3. (Original) A method according to claim 2 wherein the first elongated tubular member is a dilator.

4. (Original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the elongated body is an elongated wire.

5. (Original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the elongated body is an elongated tubular member.

6. (Original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the elongated body comprises nitinol.

7. (Original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the first membrane is the atrial septum and the second, distal membrane is the left atrial wall.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 5 wherein the distal tip of the elongated body is cut such that the distal tip of the elongated body becomes floppy.

9. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 8 wherein the cut is a spiral cut.

10. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 8 wherein the cut is a box cut.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the distal tip of the elongated body is generally straight.